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TAGS: [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [AG](#) [BE](#)  
SUBJECT: EU POLITICAL UNIT UNWILLING TO PRESS ALGERIA ON  
REFUGEE CENSUS

REF: A. A. 06 STATE 201212  
[1](#)B. B. BRUSSELS 00029

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Laurence Wohlers for reason  
s 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Refugee Officer delivered talking points (Ref A) on Jan. 11 to Manfredo Fanti, Deputy Head of Unit for the Mahgreb at the European Commission's Directorate General for External Relations (RELEX), urging the EU to press the Government of Algeria and Polisario to allow UNHCR to conduct a census of Western Saharan refugees in Algeria. Like his colleague at DG-ECHO, to whom refoff delivered the same talking points on Dec. 22 (Ref B), Fanti said he is in complete agreement with US objectives, but there is no consensus within the EU to press for a refugee registration. Calling the Western Saharan refugee issue "politically delicate," Fanti said the 27 EU member states have divergent views, making it difficult for the EU to speak with one voice. In particular, he said, France and Spain have longstanding strategic and cultural interests in the area and are unlikely to agree upon a unified stance. In addition, the Nordic countries maintain close watch on the issue from a human rights and self-determination standpoint. If the EU were to approach the GOA directly, he said, it would likely be perceived as a hostile move which had aid reduction as its ultimate goal.

[1](#)2. (C) Fanti noted that past efforts to convince the GOA to consider a census have been met with outright refusal, but he senses a recent softening. UNHCR colleagues with whom he met earlier this week told him they raised the issue with the GOA recently and were met by silence rather than refusal, which he sees as progress.

[1](#)3. (C) The EU shares US concerns that current refugee estimates are not accurate and that aid is not properly targeted because it is difficult to assess the needs of the refugee population, Fanti said. He noted that the Government of Morocco, which would support a census, has subtly warned the EU that its aid is likely being misused in the Tindouf area. The current proposals for autonomy being developed by Morocco for presentation to the UN soon may provide an opening to revisit the refugee census issue, Fanti said. He urged the USG to continue talking to France and Spain. If those two governments can be persuaded that it is appropriate to press for a census, they can give the EU a green light to go forward, he said.

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